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News Release

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South African Contemporary Artist William Kentridge to Lecture

"I am interested in a political art, that is to say an art of ambiguity, contradiction, uncompleted gestures and uncertain ending—an art (and a politics) in which optimism is kept in check and nihilism at bay."
—William Kentridge, 1998

CLEVELAND (Oct. 16, 2003) — Internationally acclaimed South African artist William Kentridge will present a lecture on his work at the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) in conjunction with the exhibition **Drawing Modern: Works from the Agnes Gund Collection,** Sunday, Nov. 2, at 5 p.m. in Gartner Auditorium.

Tickets are $5, free to students with ID. Tickets are available by calling the CMA Ticket Center at (216) 421-7350 or 1-888-CMA-0033 or buying online at www.ClevelandArt.org.

Kentridge fuses expressionism, film, drawing, sculpture, graphics, music, theater and opera to express the complex political and historical realities of his homeland. Kentridge's work transcends the problems of South Africa to address the human condition in general. His body of work is an example of how separate media can function together from one single artistic sensibility.

Born in Johannesburg (1955) where he continues to live and work, Kentridge earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Politics and African Studies from the University of Witwaterstrand in 1976. He studied fine art with respected painter and teacher Bill Ainslie at the Johannesburg Art Foundation from 1976–78. Throughout this time he was heavily involved in theater, designing and acting in a number of productions.

His interest in theater continued through his career and clearly informs the dramatic and narrative character of his art as well as his interests in linking drawing and film. His work is expressionistic and is dominated by the use of charcoal with limited touches of pastel. Generally the drawings are conceived as the basis of animated films.

His animated films vary in length from three to eight minutes and vividly illustrate his personal technique of drawing in charcoal. He films a few frames, erases them and then re-draws over the faint traces of the imagery that has been erased. Each of these drawings is like a storyboard sketch, often filmed without moving the camera. From 1989–96 Kentridge made an important cycle of films called "Drawings for Projection" that allegorize South Africa's

(more)

political upheavals primarily through the lives of two characters: a greedy property developer named Soho Eckstein, and his romantic altar-ego, Felix Teitelbaum. The 8-minute animation, *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (1989), was the first in a series of these short animated films.

A highlight to the exhibition **Drawing Modern: Works from the Agnes Gund Collection** is Kentridge's *Vitrine-Flipbook Drawings* (1999) (total of 26). Drawn on a textbook of Catalan grammar, the sequence shows a naked figure isolated in a pool looking down at a floating hat; he reaches down for it, puts it on, and faces us frontally. He then metamorphoses into a figure dressed in a pinstriped suit. The hat slowly moves down the man's body and consumes him, transforming finally into a telephone that floats on the water, representing an Everyman affected by the desires and strictures of a post-industrial world.

Drawing Modern: Works from the Agnes Gund Collection is on view through Jan. 11, 2004. This exhibition is supported in part by Hahn Loeser + Parks LLP. The Cleveland Museum of Art receives operating support from the Ohio Arts Council and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The Cleveland Museum of Art is one of America's leading comprehensive museums. Its permanent collection is world renowned for its quality and breadth, spanning 6,000 years. The Museum is a pivotal international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and art acquisitions. For more information on the Museum, its holdings, programs, services and events, call 1-888-CMA-0033 or visit www.ClevelandArt.org.

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